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ABSTRACT

This report concerns the setting of minimum standards for the New York City public schools. The commission recommends that a universal standard be set for all public schools with an improvement target of at least 50% reduction in deficits over a three-year period. Limited English proficient (LEP) students, special education students, and alternative high schools will be subject to the same standards but task forces will be created to help them meet the standards. Four major improvements are called for in the Board's method of assessing school quality and performance: (1) cohort analysis, (2) feeder-school accountability, (3) credit accumulation, and (4) criterion referenced assessment. In the elementary school, minimum standards for reading, mathematics, and attendance (with an average daily attendance rate of at least 90%) are suggested; in the middle school, standards are for the latter three categories with an 85% attendance rate and should include a standard for promotion rate. In the high school, standards are set for reading, mathematics, graduation rate, regnets-endorsed diplomas, dropout rate, and attendance. In order to implement the standards process and ensure that they generate school improvement, the Commission recommends the creation of a Standards Appeals Panel and a Standards Review Panel. (CG)

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FOUNDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

First Report to the Chancellor

from the Chancellor's Commission
on Minimum Standards
for the New York City Public Schools

May, 1986

UD024927

The Chairperson of the Commission wishes to acknowledge with thanks his own indebtedness as well as that of the members of the Commission to Julia Friedlander who has carried the major responsibility for converting the rich and varied discussions of the Commission and our consultants into this report; to Jody Spiro for her continuing substantive contributions as well as for her efforts at anchoring our deliberations in the realities of the New York City public school system; and to the following members of the Board of Education staff for generating, presenting and interpreting data and conceptual models which have been essential to much of our work: Ray Domanico, Al Goldman, Rick Guttenberg, Stan Klein, Wayne Trigg, and Charles Troob.

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I. LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Honorable Nathan Quinones
Chancellor, New York City Public Schools
110 Livingston Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear Mr. Quinones;

I am pleased to submit a first report on behalf of the Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards. You may expect a final set of recommendations from the Commission before October 30, 1986 and a final technical report from me before December 31, 1986.

You are aware that the staggered reports are designed to enable the Board of Education and your office to move ahead with a set of standards which will be operative in the 1986/87 school year, even though the Commission will not have completed its recommendations until late summer or early fall. Our first report proposes standards on the criteria you set forth in Special Circular No. 23, 1985/86 dated March 4, 1986, subject: Chancellor's Implementation Plan for Schools in Need of Assistance. As you outlined in the Chancellor's Plan, this report from the Commission is only a first step in the process of school improvement. The Commission proposes these standards with the understanding that this report will catalyze and help focus the mobilization of resources at every level of the City's educational system.

It is the intent of the Commission that the standards outlined in this report be used by schools to measure their progress over the next three academic years. Both during and following this three-year period, however, the standards should be reevaluated and refined, both in terms of their impact on the quality of education in the City of New York and in terms of their continued usefulness. This report represents the efforts of my staff and myself to reflect the sense of the full Commission with respect to the many questions we have addressed. Our commitment to produce this report on a timely basis has placed certain constraints on our review process; however, all members of the Commission have had the opportunity to comment on this report both at Commission meetings and through individual consultations.

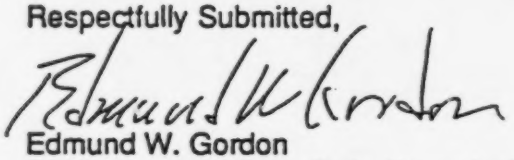
Although the criteria you outlined in the Chancellor's Plan include a section entitled "Background Data for All Schools," in which some institutional and contextual characteristics are defined, it is the judgment of the Commission that the treatment of these issues merits more emphasis. Our final set of recommended criteria and standards will reflect the interacting factors that contribute to a school's effectiveness: student characteristics, staff characteristics, the organization and management of schools, and the relationship of schools to their surrounding communities. The process of assessing schools must take into account all of these factors to be both fair and

reasonable. We must assess how things are accomplished as well as the context in which they are done in order to more fully evaluate student outcomes.

This judgment has led the Commission into broader deliberations than are reflected in our first report. Here, we have focused on student outcomes. Our final set of recommendations and technical report will address a broader range of factors which contribute to school effectiveness.

For the members of the Commission, the Commission staff and for myself, I would like to express appreciation to the members and staff of the Board of Education and to you for your commitment to undertaking this standards-setting task. We appreciate the confidence in the Commission that you have shown by asking us to undertake this task and by respecting our freedom to inquire and recommend independently. Our first report is attached to this letter.

Respectfully Submitted,



Edmund W. Gordon
Chairperson, Chancellor's Commission
on Minimum Standards

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section has three components:

A. highlights of the principles that have guided our standard setting and of the mechanisms we have used in our standards;
B. charts outlining the Chancellor's criteria for assessing schools and the Commission's proposed standards; and
C. implementation recommendations to the Board of Education.

A. HIGHLIGHTS

• **FOUNDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:** The Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards views the efforts to establish criteria and standards for assessing the New York City public schools and the judicious but rigorous implementation of these standards as being directed at improving the quality of our public schools and at laying the foundation for a higher level of academic excellence for all our students. The system of assessment and the system of improvement are intended to increase the competencies of students at every level of schooling.

• **UNIVERSAL STANDARDS:** The work of the Commission has been guided by the strong conviction that all schools in the City of New York should be held to the same minimum standards. We believe that the standards we have designed are sensitive to the diversity of students and schools throughout the City. There should be no exceptions made to the expectations outlined in the standards we have proposed. We call on the Board of Education to provide additional resources to schools which will face special challenges in meeting these standards.

• **IMPROVEMENT TARGETS:** While the ultimate goal of the improvement process is for schools to meet the standards we have proposed, when this is not possible the Commission endorses the Chancellor's directive that schools reduce their deficits by at least 50 percent over a three-year period. We believe that this mechanism ensures that the standards will define attainable goals for those schools most in need of improvement.

• **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS:** The Commission believes that schools with a large population of students who have limited proficiency in English should be held to the same standards as other schools. However, we believe that available instruments for assessment of Limited English Proficient students may raise valid questions of fairness. The Commission will create a task force to study assessment policy and procedures for these students over the summer of 1986. The recommendations of this task force will be included in the final Commission report.

• **SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS:** The Commission will create a second task force to study the reporting of achievement data for special education students. We believe it is important for

the Commission to evaluate the use of special education data in the standards process, especially as the proportion of special education students in any given school reflects administrative and demographic as well as educational considerations. The recommendations of this task force will also be included in the final Commission report.

• **ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS:** Given the special needs of their student populations and the often non-traditional nature of their organization, the way in which the Commission's standards will be applied to alternative high schools needs further clarification. The Commission will create a third task force to make recommendations concerning the standards process for alternative high schools. These recommendations will be included in the final Commission report.

• **ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT GOALS:** The Commission has been charged with proposing universal minimum standards. These standards, by definition, fall at a level that some schools will easily meet. However, we do not believe that these schools should be exempted from the standards process. At the high school level, we are calling on the Executive Director of the High Schools Division to recommend to the Chancellor higher standards for those schools which have preselected populations and/or a history of high performance.

• **SCHOOL ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENTS:** The Commission is calling for four major improvements in the Board's method of assessing school quality and performance:

1) **Cohort Analysis**: We believe it is essential to compare a specific cohort or group of students to itself over time as well as to other groups of students in order to fairly evaluate the ability of a school to produce improvement.

2) **Feeder-School Accountability**: We believe that the assessment of a school should include an evaluation of the students it delivers to the next level of schooling. We are calling on the Board to analyze the first-year performance of students in a given school in such a way as to reflect on the schools from which those students came.

3) **Credit Accumulation:** While most assessment of student performance is based on standardized testing, we believe it is important to monitor the rate at which students accumulate the course credits required for graduation. We are calling on the Board to establish this monitoring procedure in the high schools next year; eventually we would like to see this mechanism established at the middle school level.

4) **Criterion-Referenced Assessment:** The Commission believes that in order to be most useful in the classroom, results from standardized tests should be reported in a criterion-referenced mode. We are calling on the Board to use this method of test reporting and to move toward use of tests which lend themselves to criterion-referenced analysis.

B. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MINIMUM STANDARDS

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading	
Grade 3	At least 60% read at or above State Reference Point (50th percentile)
Grade 6	At least 65% read at or above State Reference Point (50th percentile)
Grades 2, 4, 5	Progress standards to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	
Grade 3	At least 65% score at or above State Reference Point
Grade 6	At least 65% score at or above State Reference Point
Grades 2, 4, 5	Progress standards to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Attendance	Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 90%

B. MIDDLE SCHOOL MINIMUM STANDARDS

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading	
Grade 8	At least 80% score at or above State Reference Point (39th percentile)
Grades 7 and 9	Progress standards to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	
Grade 9	At least 70% pass RCT or Regents (at least 25% pass Regents)
Grade 7	Progress standard to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
Grade 8	Fixed standard to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Attendance	Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 85%
• Promotion Rate	New indicator to be developed

B. HIGH SCHOOL MINIMUM STANDARDS

Note: The Executive Director of the High School Division will set Higher Standards for Specialized/Educational Option Schools.

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading	a. 100% of twelfth graders pass RCTs or Regents b. At least 30% meet requirement by passing Regents c. Progress standards in Grades 9 and 10 to be determined (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	a. At least 70% pass RCT or Regents in Grade 9 (at least 25% pass Regents) b. At least 80% pass RCT or Regents in Grade 10 (at least 25% pass Regents) c. At least 90% pass RCT or Regents in Grade 11 (at least 25% pass Regents) d. 100% pass RCT or Regents in Grade 12 (at least 25% pass Regents)
• Graduation Rate	At least 90% of eligible candidates graduate (January - June - August)
• Regents-Endorsed Diplomas	At least 15% of graduates receive Regents-Endorsed Diplomas
• Dropout Rate	No school's dropout rate is above 7.5% annually
• Attendance	a. Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 85% b. No more than 20% absent 16 or more days per semester c. No more than 5% Long Term Absentees

C. IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission believes that the implementation of the standards process requires the creation of two new bodies, a Standards Appeals Panel, and a Standards Review Panel. We recommend that these groups be convened during the summer of 1986.

The Standards Appeals Panel would be composed of educational leaders from both within and outside the New York City school system, chosen by the Chancellor and the Chairman of the Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards. The Standards Appeals Panel would consider the cases of individual schools believing themselves now, or over the course of the next three years, to be improperly assigned to the category of schools falling below standard. The purpose of this panel is to investigate the implementation and impact of the standards process on a case-by-case basis.

The Standards Review Panel will oversee the implementation of the standards process on a citywide basis. This Panel will be composed of members of the Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards designated by the Chairperson and the Chancellor and will monitor the overall functioning and appropriateness of the standards. If necessary, this panel will be responsible for refining the standards. The purpose of this panel is to ensure that the standards are implemented appropriately and fairly and that they serve their intent of generating school improvement.

The Commission has not recommended specific mechanisms for implementing efforts at school improvement. It is nonetheless our expectation that the Chancellor will utilize appropriate existing mechanisms and, if necessary, create new mechanisms and resources with which priority will be given to using the proposed standards to guide the improvement of all our schools. Commission members are especially sympathetic to the Chancellor's declared intention to give greatest priority to those schools which are determined to be most in need of assistance.

III. INTRODUCTION

Why Set Standards?

For most of this century we have seen fluctuating attention paid to the quality of the nation's public schools. At times, this attention has focused on equality of educational opportunity for immigrant and minority groups. Most recently, widespread public concern has been voiced over the effectiveness of public schools in preparing all students for functioning in a changing society. Reports like "A Nation at Risk," the most widely circulated of several studies on the status of education in the United States, have warned of the threat to the nation posed by the poorly-educated products of our schools. This concern has developed into a demand that schools, as well as students, be held accountable for their mutual productivity.

Standards and accountability have been discussed at all levels of educational policy-making and administration as well as in many forums for public debate. In the context of national attention to school quality, the Chancellor of the New York City schools issued his plan for the public schools, "Changing Schools for Changing Needs," in November, 1985. The Chancellor's Plan defined the criteria for assessing school quality upon which the standards in this report are based. The purpose of these standards is to establish a common understanding of the minimum level of acceptable school performance and to guide school improvement.

The Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards

The Chancellor's Plan for the New York City public schools called for establishing minimum standards as part of his long-term strategy for school improvement. The Chancellor's Commission on Minimum Standards was convened by the Chancellor in January, 1986 with the following purposes: 1) to recommend minimum standards on all of the Chancellor's criteria; 2) to recommend a method of weighting criteria by determining the relative importance of each criterion; and 3) to recommend a method for incorporating the background information on each school in the evaluation process.

The Chancellor's Commission is composed of thirty educational leaders from New York City and elsewhere. The Commission includes school principals, superintendents, union representatives, representatives from parents organizations and educational advocacy groups, and private sector leaders (See Appendix A for a list of Commission members). The Commission is chaired by Professor Edmund W. Gordon, Professor of Psychology and Afro-American Studies at Yale University and Visiting Professor of Education and Psychology at City College of New York. Professor Gordon selected a small staff consisting of Dr. Ernest Washington, Chairman of the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Dr. Dawn Arno, a specialist in educational administration and President of DFA Associates,

Learning and Management Consultants; and Julia Friedlander and Lynn Yanis, Special Research and Editorial Assistants to Professor Gordon at Yale.

The Chancellor's Commission met in full session four times to generate the following report. After a series of individual consultations with school leaders, Commission members, and Board of Education staff, Commission staff prepared working papers and report drafts which were discussed and approved at the meetings of the full Commission. The final draft of this first report was submitted to all members of the Commission, whose names are listed in Appendix A. The report has been endorsed by all those members except those whose names are preceded by an asterisk.

Foundations for Academic Excellence: The First Report of the Chancellor's Commission

This report deals primarily with the Commission's first mandate: to recommend minimum standards on all of the Chancellor's criteria for assessing schools. Although the Commission has discussed proposals for weighting criteria and for incorporating background information on each school, we have not yet come to agreement about a systematic method for dealing with these elements of our task.

The Chancellor's Commission will present its final report to the Chancellor in October, 1986. That report will include a full discussion of the weighting of criteria and a full discussion of incorporating background data. The systematic consideration of these issues may lead to minor modifications of the proposed standards we have outlined here. However, it should be understood that the standards we are presenting in this report have been formulated to be sensitive to the diversity of student backgrounds and schools, which the background data suggested by the Chancellor are intended to address.

While the school is the unit of analysis in this standard-setting process, we have tried to look at a school as a composite of individual students rather than as a subset of the system as a whole. We are concerned with how data are analyzed, as well as with what data are collected, in order to provide information about individual student progress. The Student Information System developed by the Board over the last several years has been essential to this effort, and there are many places where we call for continuing the expansion of the system's data management capabilities.

For example, our concern for looking at indicators of student progress as well as levels of achievement demonstrates our desire to create standards for schools that are derived from an understanding of the individuals who compose a student body. We would like to see the information system developed to the point where a school could be judged according to the percent of its students who meet their individual annual progress goals. We would also like that system to enable us to analyze student achievement relative to the number of

semesters a student has been in a particular school, as well as to the aggregate enrollment at a particular grade level.

On many criteria we have called for looking at particular groups of students over time rather than at repeated static pictures of a school's population as a whole. These efforts respond to the legitimate desire among school professionals to be judged on the basis of the growth they foster in their students over time, not on the basis of a momentary profile of the population with which they work. We feel that standards must demonstrate sensitivity to this concern and take advantage of the capacity of New York City's Student Information System to contribute to a fair and effective accountability and school improvement program.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR STANDARD-SETTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following principles and assumptions have guided the Commission's consideration of standard-setting issues. We believe that these principles and assumptions must also guide the process of implementing standards. There have been times in the development and discussion of specific standards when some of the principles outlined below have appeared to contradict one another. The most complex contradiction we have faced is that between our commitment to universal standards and our concern with the special needs and challenges faced by students and schools in New York's extremely diverse educational system. The implementation of the standards, as well as the continuing work of the Commission, will require the reconciliation of some of these contradictions in the interest of ensuring high quality education to all students in all schools. We trust that the Board of Education will adhere to the spirit of these principles as it undertakes the implementation of the standards program.

Principle of Universal Minimum Standards

The Commission believes that all schools in the City of New York should be held to the same minimum standards. This principle is based on the belief that all students can learn and that student failure often demonstrates a failure of the educational system to diagnose and address students' differential needs. When it has been difficult to make standards relevant to both high- and low-performing schools, the Commission has opted to suggest additional requirements for high-performing schools. We believe that there should be no exceptions to minimum standards.

Principle of Differential Improvement Targets

The Commission endorses the Chancellor's directive that schools falling below standard reduce their deficit by at least fifty percent in three years, when it is impossible to eliminate the deficit entirely. This mechanism ensures that the standards process will be relevant to those schools for whom it is most important. With this mechanism in place, standards will apply to schools as they are situated and performing now, not just as we would like them to be. This mechanism also recognizes the diversity of school populations. All schools in New York City are affected by such factors as the existence of special programs, selection procedures in certain schools, and the geographic segregation that defines many communities and school populations. The Chancellor's mechanism acknowledges that there is no typical school in New York and that each school must be considered in its specific context. We propose, in the interest of flexibility, that the Chancellor create a Standards Appeals Panel to consider the cases of those schools which feel they have been improperly identified as falling below standard, and of those schools which over the next three years, feel they have demonstrated sufficient improvement to warrant removal from the list of schools below standard.

Principle of Differential Indicators Addressing Universal Standards

High-performing schools and alternative high schools present a challenge to the Commission's principle of universal minimum standards, as do schools with large populations of special education or LEP (Limited English Proficient) students. The Commission feels strongly that expectations for student performance should be maintained in these schools just as they are in other schools. However, in light of the structure and design of alternative schools, there are cases in which expecting the same kind of performance may require using different measurement and monitoring techniques. For example, in a school with many LEP students, new tests in students' native languages may be called for. In schools with a high mobility rate, it may be appropriate to monitor each student's length of stay. These issues will be addressed more fully in the October report to the Chancellor. Furthermore, although the Commission's mandate focuses on minimum standards, we believe that standards must also be established for those schools that will meet minimum standards without difficulty. We have called on the Executive Director of the High Schools Division to propose to the Chancellor standards for high schools which have a pre-selected student population and/or a long history of high performance. This report does not fully address the question of how to treat alternative high schools, or other schools with special student populations.

Principle of Progress Indicators

The Commission believes that in addition to fixed standards that all schools must meet, standards should be established which outline the amount of progress students should be expected to make from year to year. Progress standards will be equally relevant to high-performing schools and to low-performing schools. In setting standards for reading and math achievement, the Commission has used graduation requirements as the desired outcome and worked backward to set standards for performance that can be expected to lead to this outcome. Progress standards will help assure that progress in student achievement is distributed throughout a student population. The intent is to assure that gains in aggregate performance levels are not attained simply through the improvement of students whose performance is already satisfactory or better.

Principle of Criterion-Referenced Assessment

The Commission believes that student performance standards should be as criterion-referenced as possible because understanding students' skill mastery relative to other students is less important than understanding students' mastery of knowledge and skills relative to that which is necessary for performance at the next level of work. We advocate both criterion-referenced reporting of results from existing tests and movement toward use of tests which lend themselves more effectively to this kind of analysis. This will help make standards diagnostically useful in the process of school improvement.

Principle of Accountability and School Improvement in the Standards Process

The Chancellor's standard-setting process has two purposes -- ensuring that schools remain accountable to the public in their efforts to provide quality education, and providing a framework for pursuing school improvement. The standards described in this report are based on criteria outlined by the Chancellor in Special Circular #23, 1985-86. The Commission considers these criteria to be a minimum accountability list. The October report will outline other criteria which the Commission believes will be useful in identifying problems and suggesting future directions for school improvement.

Principle of Symmetry

When it considers additional criteria for school assessment, the Commission will be guided by the principle that the full criteria list should demonstrate greater symmetry in the consideration of staff, institutional, and student characteristics. This principle is based on the assumption that in assessing school quality, it is important to look at both input and output characteristics and the interactions between the two.

Principle of Shared Responsibility

Setting standards for school performance indicates that the Chancellor believes the individual school is the most appropriate unit of analysis in assessing the quality of public education in the City of New York. While we agree that it is essential to set standards on a schoolwide basis, we believe that many of the criteria which follow illustrate problems which are beyond the control of individual principals, and in many cases even beyond the control of district or high school superintendents. The severe teacher shortage, especially in the sciences and math, is only one example of an obstacle to school performance that lies beyond the responsibility of individual schools and demands action by the Chancellor and the Board of Education. We believe that this situation may even require a new level of cooperation between the corporate sector, City government and the public schools. School-based educational improvement demands collaboration at all levels.

Principle of Resource Availability

The Commission believes that the standards process will be an exercise in futility if it is not accompanied by a significant influx of resources to those schools that fall below standard. These resources must include both programmatic resources to address the problems identified by specific standards, and technical assistance in the evaluation and use of school profile data in setting goals and programs for school improvement. In some instances reallocation of existing resources may be sufficient; in other cases changes in the complement of human resources may be necessary, and in still other cases additional resources will be required. In no instance will it be sufficient to simply move the student population to another similar situation.

VI. ELEMENTARY AND INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The following section outlines standards for reading achievement in grades two through nine, for mathematics achievement in grades two through nine, and for student attendance in grades K through nine. The Commission intends standards for ninth graders to be identical for students in intermediate schools and students in high schools. In reading, the ninth grade standard is a progress standard. In mathematics there is a fixed standard for RCT and Regents performance which will apply in the same manner to ninth grade middle school and high school students.

The Commission has chosen not to propose standards at this time for writing test scores in grades 5 and 8. Although these tests may be useful for evaluating individual students, we have reservations about their usefulness for making judgments about large student populations and schools. Until greater consistency can be assured in the assessment of writing skills, the Commission believes that we should not propose a standard for this indicator.

The Commission has also chosen not to propose standards for the'eighth grade graduation' and 'number of incidents' criteria in our first report. Unfortunately, we do not yet have access to the data we would need in order to propose a meaningful middle school graduation standard. We believe, with the Chancellor, that the point of transition from middle school to high school is a critical point in a student's educational career, and that schools' capacity to facilitate this transition should be monitored carefully. However, we cannot set a standard for this criterion until uniform academic requirements for eighth grade graduation have been established. The Commission intends to develop a standard for this indicator as soon as data are available which distinguish between students who do and do not meet eighth grade graduation requirements before entering high school.

On a long-term basis, the Commission believes school assessment efforts should include an analysis of patterns in the performance of first year intermediate and high school students according to their school of origin. We believe that a student's success or failure at one level is influenced by his or her experience at the prior level. By looking at student achievement and engagement characteristics in the first year of middle school, it may be possible to assess the adequacy of students' preparation in elementary school. The Commission may explore this relationship further for its final report.

We have postponed proposing a safety standard for New York City Schools because many Commission members have reservations about using statistical measures of school safety and atmosphere. The Commission believes that incidents are destructive to any school both because they physically endanger students and staff and because they disrupt teaching and learning. The Commission believes that there is no acceptable number of incidents in a

school. However, some will occur. The purpose of a school safety standard is to assure that incidents do not destabilize the educational process. We do not believe that this destabilization point can be statistically defined. It will vary tremendously depending on the history of the school and the nature and seriousness of the incidents. An armed assault has a different effect on a school from a student's possession of a controlled substance. If we ultimately decided to use incidents data to set a safety standard, the Board's current categories of 'incidents' and 'serious incidents' must be broken down so that they reveal these differing impacts.

We are also aware of the wide variations in reporting incidents from school to school. We believe that it would be counterproductive to set a standard which discourages school personnel from reporting incidents. For all these reasons, the Commission intends to develop a more useful indicator of school climate and safety. We will propose a school safety standard in our final October report.

READING ACHIEVEMENT

Proposed Standards - Elementary Level

1) The Commission recommends that at least 60 percent of students in every school should score at or above the State Reference Point (the 50th percentile of a national sample) on the grade 3 PEP test.

2) The Commission recommends that at least 65 percent of students in every school should score at or above the State Reference Point (the 52nd percentile of a national sample) on the grade 6 PEP test.

Proposed Standards - Intermediate Level

3) The Commission recommends that at least 80 percent of students in every school should score at or above the State Reference Point (the 39th percentile of a national sample) on the grade 8 PCT test.

Proposed Standards - Both Levels

4) The Commission will propose standards for all grades which will indicate the minimum number of students in each school who should perform in the top quartile on the Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP) and the maximum number of students who should perform in the bottom quartile on the DRP.

5) The Commission will set progress standards for grades 2-9 using the DRP Test. Schools will be assessed according to the percentage of their students who demonstrate the expected amount of growth from one test administration to the next.

Discussion

The standards outlined above are based on the Commission's belief that the development of reading skills in the early grades is the most important determinant of a student's ultimate success or failure in the school system. The recent trend of citywide improvement in student performance on reading as well as on math tests must continue and accelerate.

The standards model we have designed to assess reading and math achievement at all levels consists of two kinds of standards: universal fixed standards at selected grade levels and progress standards at all grade levels. In most cases, the Commission has chosen to establish fixed standards using tests mandated by the State. Progress standards are then based on tests administered by the City. In the case of reading achievement, the State and the City both use forms of the same test, the Degrees of Reading Power test, which is administered by the State as the PEP test in grades 3 and 6 and as the PCT in grade 8, and which is being administered by the City in all other grades 2 through 10 for the first time this year.

The Commission believes that the use of the DRP as the citywide reading test this year will have a positive effect on student performance. For this reason, we have established fixed standards higher than those used by the State of New York in its Comprehensive Assessment Report. At the third grade, the State called for 50 percent of students to score at or above the State Reference Point; the Commission is calling for 60 percent of students to attain this level of reading achievement. In 1984-85, 52 percent of the elementary schools in New York City would have fallen below this standard.

At the sixth grade, the State called for 50 percent of students to score at or above the State Reference Point; the Commission is calling for 65 percent of students in every New York City school to perform at this level. In 1984-85, 56 percent of the schools in New York City would have fallen below this standard. At the eighth grade, the State called for 77 percent of students to score at or above the State Reference Point; the Commission is calling for 80 percent of New York City students to perform at this level. In 1984-85, 58 percent of NYC schools would have fallen below this standard. At all three grade levels, we anticipate that fewer schools will fall below these standards in 1985-86.

Readers will note that we are expecting a progressively higher percentage of students to score at or above the State Reference Point in the later grades. This expectation is based on the fact that reading performance tends to impove in later grades, and on the fact that the State Reference Point is substantially lower, relative to national norms, in the later grades. In grade 3, the State Reference Point is equivalent to the fiftieth percentile of a derived national sample. At grade 8, the State Reference Point is equivalent to the 39th percentile of a derived national sample.

The exact mechanisms for the standards described in numbers 4 and 5 above are being refined by Commission and Board staff. These standards will be described in fuller detail in the Commission's final report. Standard #4 is based on the Commission's belief that it is essential that improvement in aggregate achievement levels not be allowed to obscure persistent patterns in the distribution of student performance. It is unacceptable for individual schools and for the City as a whole to improve achievement levels solely by developing those students with most potential for success or with the strongest previous demonstrations of high achievement. We believe that for the standards process to be significant, it must contribute to raising the level of achievement for those students at and near the bottom of the achievement spectrum. For this reason, we are calling for the Board to monitor achievement for the bottom and top quartiles on the DRP.

Standard number 5 above is based on the belief that standards should monitor growth and improvement in student achievement. It is not enough to know how many students in a school perform at particular levels. We need to monitor the ability of schools over time to move students from one level to another. A school with a large percentage of students scoring above the State Reference Point on a particular test should not be commended if those students are performing at

the same level they were in the previous year. On the other hand, the success of a school with many students scoring below the State Reference Point should be recognized if those students have demonstrated a great deal of improvement over the previous year. Progress standards represent the Commission's effort to make standards sensitive to the nature of schools' incoming populations. The mechanism for measuring progress on the Degrees of Reading Power Test will be described in the final Commission report.

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT

Proposed Standards - Elementary Level

1) The Commission recommends that at least 65 percent of students in every school should score at or above the State Reference Point on the grade 3 mathematics PEP test.

2) The Commission recommends that at least 65 percent of students in every school should score at or above the State Reference Point on the grade 6 mathematics PEP test.

Proposed Standards - Intermediate Level

3) The Commission will formulate a standard for student performance on the eighth grade Metropolitan Achievement Test.

4) The Commission recommends that at least 70 percent of students in every intermediate school should have met the graduation examination requirement in mathematics by the end of the ninth grade. Of these students, 25 percent should have met the requirement by passing a Regents Exam in mathematics rather than the Regents Competency Test.

Proposed Standards - Both Levels

5) The Commission will formulate standards which will indicate the minimum percent of students in each school who should perform in the top quartile on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in grades 2 through 8 and the maximum percent of students who should perform in the bottom quartile.

6) The Commission will formulate progress standards for the MAT which will indicate the expected amount of change in student performance from one test date to the next.

Discussion

The model for assessing mathematics achievement outlined above has two main components: fixed standards on the State-mandated PEP test at grades 3 and 6 and the citywide Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT)at grade 8, and progress standards on the MAT at all other grades, 2 through 8. The standards at grades 3, 6, and 8 are intended to be fixed targets for achievement. The intervening standards will measure progress toward those targets.

The standards proposed above are considerably more rigorous than those used by the State in the Comprehensive Assessment Report. The State called for 53 percent of students in the third grade to score at or above the State Reference Point; the Commission is calling for 65 percent of New York City

students to perform at this level. In 1984-85 roughly 52% of elementary schools in New York City would have fallen below this standard. At the sixth grade, the State called for 50 percent of students in every school to score at or above the State Reference Point; the Commission is calling for 65% of students to perform at this level. In 1984-85 roughly 55% of New York City schools would have fallen below this standard.

Although we have used the City's tests primarily for establishing progress standards, we are proposing here to establish a fixed standard for eighth grade performance on the City's Metropolitan Achievement Test. The Commission believes it is important to have a fixed standard which will assess the outcome of intermediate-level math instruction. Currently the State administers no test between the sixth grade PEP and the Regents Competency Test, which is first administered in ninth grade, when most students are in high schools. We consider this accountability measure as a mechanism directed both at schools and at the system as a whole. We believe that the shortage of qualified teachers is particularly severe in the area of intermediate level math; it is incumbent on the system to respond to this standard by taking steps to address this shortage.

Because the Metropolitan Achievement Test is being administered for the first time this year, the Commission has no data now that can guide us in setting the MAT standard. This standard will be proposed for the Commission's final October report.

Standards number 4 and 5 above are intended to address our concerns, described in the reading achievement section, regarding patterns of achievement and improvement. The mechanisms for assessing progress and quartile performance and the standards for these indicators will be described in greater detail in the October report.

ATTENDANCE

Proposed Standard - Elementary Level

1) The Commission recommends that every elementary school in the City of New York should have an average daily attendance rate of at least 90 percent.

Proposed Standards - Intermediate Level

2) The Commission recommends that every intermediate school in the City of New York should have an average daily attendance rate of at least 85 percent.

3) The Commission will propose a standard for the maximum percent of students in every intermediate school who are absent 16 or more days per semester.

Discussion

The Chancellor's Commission believes that school attendance patterns and habits are established at a very early age. Therefore, while attendance is generally higher at the intermediate level than it is in high schools, and while attendance at the elementary level is higher still, we believe it is important to set rigorous standards for attendance. We believe that high attendance rates in the earlier grades will have a positive effect on student performance as well as on student attendance in the later grades.

The standards proposed in numbers 1 and 2 above fall close to the citywide median attendance rates for elementary and intermediate schools. In 1984-85 roughly 54% of the city's elementary schools would have fallen below a 90 percent attendance standard. Roughly fifty percent of the city's intermediate schools would have fallen below an 85 percent attendance standard.

Standard number 3 above is intended to monitor those students who are absent so frequently as to put them at great risk of eventual failure or dropping out. We have proposed two standards for intermediate level attendance because we believe it is important both to improve attendance for the school population as a whole and to focus attention on those students who demonstrate very poor attendance. This standard is based on the capability of the Student Information System to monitor individual student attendance for students in grade six and above. On a long-term basis the Commission would like to see this capability extended to the elementary level.

VII. HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The following section outlines standards for Regents Endorsed Diploma rates, reading and mathematics achievement, graduation rates, attendance rates, and dropout rates. The Commission has chosen not to propose a standard at this time for the Regents Competency Test in writing. Although this test may be useful for evaluating individual students, we have reservations about its usefulness in making judgments about large student populations and schools. Until greater consistency can be assured in the assessment of writing skills, the Commission believes that we should not propose a standard for this indicator.

For the reasons outlined in the introduction to the elementary and intermediate level section (page 18), we have decided not to propose a standard at this time for the number of incidents at the high school level. We intend to explore a more useful and sensitive measure of school safety and atmosphere for inclusion in our final report to the Chancellor.

The achievement standards proposed in the following pages resemble those proposed for the elementary and intermediate levels. We have based fixed outcome standards on graduation requirements and have then set standards for earlier grades that we believe will enable students to fulfill graduation requirements.

In many cases, the Commission has found setting standards at the high school level complicated by the enormous range of performance from school to school. The following section outlines standards that will primarily affect low-performing schools. However, as outlined earlier, it is equally important to establish standards relevant to higher performing schools. For this reason, we are calling on the Executive Director of the High Schools Division to recommend to the Chancellor higher standards for schools with preselected populations and/or histories of high achievement. We propose that this be undertaken for all of the standards outlined in the following pages.

Readers will note that the standards which follow are directed at regular high schools. The Commission believes that expectations for student performance in alternative schools must be maintained. There may be cases in which expecting the same level of performance will require using different measurement and monitoring techniques. The question of appropriately applying the standards process to alternative schools requires further inquiry. For these reasons, we are postponing full consideration of alternative schools until our October report.

REGENTS ENDORSED DIPLOMAS

Proposed Standard

1) The Commission recommends that every high school in the City of New York should have at least 15 percent of its graduates receive Regents Endorsed Diplomas.

Discussion

This standard has been one of the most difficult for the Commission to address. The Commission supports the Chancellor's long-standing effort to increase the number of high school graduates receiving Regents Endorsed Diplomas (REDs). However, data demonstrate that the roughly 40 percent of NYC students who receive these diplomas are very heavily concentrated in a small number of schools. The percent of graduates receiving REDs in regular NYC high schools ranges from 100 percent to 1.9 percent. It has been difficult to set a standard that can be relevant to such a wide range of schools.

Another difficulty has been presented by the recent stiffening of the requirements for earning a Regents Endorsed Diploma. This increase, which will be in effect for the class of students who graduate in the third year of the standards process, could produce a substantial decline in the number of students who receive Regents Endorsed Diplomas -- especially in those schools that currently produce relatively few REDs. We intend the RED standard to prevent such a decline, yet we find it unreasonable to expect an increase in REDs under these circumstances. The purpose of this standard is to encourage all schools to have a full program of Regents coursework available to students.

Based on the considerations outlined above, we have set a relatively low RED standard of 15%. In 1984-85, roughly 65% of regular high schools met this standard. Of those schools which fell below standard, roughly two-thirds will be required to demonstrate no more than a 3.1 percent increase in the next three years.

The Commission believes it is especially important for the Executive Director of High Schools to establish higher standards on this criterion for those schools which already meet the standard. Roughly one-third of the regular high schools which would have met the proposed 15 percent standard in 1984-85 fell below the citywide average in 1984-85. This is the group of schools from which we might expect the most significant improvement in the Regents Endorsed Diplomas rate. These schools have demonstrated that a viable program of Regents coursework exists; their task now is to channel more students into these courses.

READING ACHIEVEMENT

Proposed Standards

1) The Commission recommends that 100 percent of students in every school should have passed the Regents Competency Test in reading by the end of twelfth grade or be exempt because they have passed the English Regents Exam.

2) The Commission recommends that at least 30 percent of students in every school should meet their graduation examination requirement by passing the English Regents Exam.

3) The Commission will set progress standards for ninth and tenth grade performance on the Degrees of Reading Power test. (See elementary and intermediate level section for discussion.)

Discussion

The Chancellor's list of criteria for assessing high schools identified student performance on the Regents Competency Tests in reading and mathematics as the principle indicators for assessing high school student achievement. The Chancellor's Commission strongly believes that standards for performance in these basic subject areas should be set on the more rigorous Regents Exams as well. We feel that it is important to expose a larger number of our students to the rigor of Regents coursework, even in the absence of their earning Regents Endorsed Diplomas. This priority of the Commission is clearly in line with the Chancellor's long-standing goal of increasing the number of students who receive Regents Endorsed Diplomas.

The standard for passage of a Regents Exam has been set with the 15 percent Regents Endorsed Diploma standard in mind. In order to meet the standard for the RED, which requires students to pass several Regents Exams, schools will need to enable many more than 15 percent of their students to pass the English Regents Exam.

The progress standards outlined above will be discussed in greater detail in our October report. The purpose of these standards is to assure that students at earlier grade levels are progressing at a rate which will enable them to meet the reading examination requirement for graduation. The ninth and tenth grade progress standards will be formulated using the same model and same scale that will be used to establish progress standards on the Degrees of Reading Power test at earlier grade levels.

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT

Proposed Standards

1) The Commission recommends that at least 70 percent of students in every NYC high school should have met the graduation examination requirement in mathematics by the end of the ninth grade. Of these students, 25 percent should have met the requirement by passing a Regents Exam in mathematics.

2) The Commission recommends that at least 80 percent of students in every NYC high school should have met the graduation examination requirement in mathematics by the end of the tenth grade. Of these students, 25 percent should have met the requirement by passing a Regents Exam in mathematics.

3) The Commission recommends that at least 90 percent of students in every NYC high school should have met the graduation examination requirement in mathematics by the end of the eleventh grade. Of these students, 25 percent should have met the requirement by passing a Regents Exam in mathematics.

4) The Commission recommends that 100 percent of students in every NYC high school should have met the graduation examination requirement in mathematics by the end of the twelfth grade. Of these students, 25 percent should have met the requirement by passing a Regents Exam in mathematics.

Discussion

As with reading achievement at the high school level, the Commission believes it is essential to set standards for performance on Regents Exams in addition to standards for performance on the Regents Competency Test. In mathematics we have set standards for every high school grade level because students begin taking the mathematics Regents Competency Test and Regents Exams in the ninth grade and may take them on repeated occasions until they pass.

The Commission believes that passage of the mathematics RCT demonstrates only a minimal level of mathematics skills. Yet many students pass the RCT in the ninth or tenth grade and never take more rigorous math courses. The purpose of the standards proposed above is to encourage schools to prepare students to pass the math RCT as early as possible and then to encourage them to continue their math education by taking a Regents level course.

As in the reading achievement section, the 25 % standard for students taking a Regents Exam is related to the 15 % standard recommended for Regents Endorsed Diplomas. In order to meet the RED standard, schools will have to prepare more than 15% of their students to pass a mathematics Regents Exam. Many of those who cannot complete all the requirements for the RED should nonetheless be expected to pass at least one Regents Exam in mathematics. Readers will note that the standards model outlined above calls for an increasing number of students to pass a Regents Examination by the end of

each grade. While the recommended percentage remains constant at 25%, these students will represent a larger real number as they are a portion of an expanding pool of those students meeting their graduation examination requirement.

GRADUATION RATE

Proposed Standards

1) The Commission recommends that every high school in the City of New York should graduate at least 90 percent of its eligible candidates in January, June, and August combined.

2) The Commission recommends that the Board of Education develop the capacity to monitor the rate at which students in every school accumulate course credits toward graduation.

Discussion

The Chancellor's Commission believes that a school which has successfully retained a student into the twelfth grade should be able to graduate that student. With a ninety percent graduation standard, 35 percent of high schools would have fallen below standard in 1984-85. The Commission is proposing a relatively lenient standard on this indicator because the stiffening of diploma requirements for the class that will graduate in the third year of the standards process is expected to produce a lower rate of graduation. This standard is intended to hold the line against such a decline. In addition, the Commission believes that meeting standards along other achievement indicators will automatically improve a school's graduation rate.

The Commission sees standard #1 as an interim measure. The Commission unanimously supports the development of a more useful indicator which would measure students' progress toward graduation. A graduation rate which assesses student performance only in the twelfth grade leaves little room for intervention and improvement of student performance. Because we understand that the single most common reason for failure of seniors to graduate is failure of coursework, we would like to see the Board measure students' rate of credit accumulation throughout high school. Documenting and monitoring students' accumulation of course credits will permit intervention while there is still time available for making up coursework. The Commission would like to see this system in place during the 1986-87 school year. A standard for this indicator will be proposed at a later date.

ATTENDANCE

Proposed Standards

1) The Commission recommends that every regular high school in the City of New York should have an average daily attendance rate of at least 85 percent, excluding long-term absentees.

2) The Commission recommends that no regular high school in the City of New York should have more than 20 percent of its student population absent 16 or more days per semester, excluding long-term absentees.

3) The Commission recommends that no regular high school in the City of New York have more than 5 percent of its students long-term absentees.

Discussion

The attendance standards outlined above are based on the Commission's belief that it is important to address two different kinds of attendance problems. Some schools have a large number of students who miss many consecutive or periodic days of school on a regular basis. Other schools may have many more students who miss occasional days above and beyond the expectation for absence due to sickness. This problem may demonstrate a failure on the part of the school staff and administration to create an atmosphere in which regular attendance by all students is expected. In many cases, these two problems will go hand in hand. In other cases we anticipate that a school's attendance profile will reveal one or the other problem more clearly. Setting a dual standard for attendance enables standards to be diagnostic so that measures taken to improve attendance can be appropriate to the specific school.

Commission members believe that improving student attendance is an essential ingredient in improving the overall quality of schools. We believe that better attendance will contribute to lowering the dropout rate and contribute to improving student achievement. For this reason, we are setting a very rigorous attendance standard. While we understand that an improvement of less than one percent in the citywide attendance rate from 1983-84 to 1984-85 was considered statistically significant, we believe that individual schools can produce substantially larger increases from year to year. We are especially confident that this is possible because the citywide improvement referred to occurred before the influx of new resources for attendance improvement/dropout prevention efforts.

In 1984-85 roughly 50 percent of regular New York City high schools would have fallen below an 85 percent attendance standard. With this standard, the lowest performing school would be required to improve its attendance rate by 6.7 percent in the initial three years of the standards process, or roughly 2.2 percent per year. In the first six periods of 1985-86, approximately ten percent of regular New York City high schools demonstrated at least this much

improvement in their attendance rate over the first six periods of the previous year. This data leads us to believe that our standard is both educationally sound and feasible. Of course, the vast majority of high schools falling below standard on the attendance rate will be required to demonstrate much smaller amounts of improvement.

The Chancellor's Commission believes that students with frequent absences deserve special attention in the standards process. A 1984 draft Board of Education report, "Longitudinal Study of Students Entering High School in 1979," demonstrates that poor attendance in a student's first term in high school correlates very strongly with failure to graduate. In the class which entered high school in 1979, students absent from nine to fifteen days were slightly more likely to graduate than to drop out. By contrast, students absent sixteen or more days were seven times as likely to drop out as to graduate. Clearly, students who establish poor attendance patterns from the beginning of high school must be considered at very high risk of dropping out. We believe that a 20% standard for students absent 16 or more days is essential. In addition, we are proposing that no more than 5 percent of a school's students should be long-term absentees, defined as students who have been absent every day for a month.

Finally, the Commission believes that any discussion of student attendance must consider the impact of teacher behavior on student attendance. The Commission believes that poor teacher attendance has a very strong negative effect on student attendance. Teacher attendance patterns will be studied for discussion in the October Commission report. We are also considering recommending that a study be conducted to evaluate the support services provided to schools by the Bureau of Attendance.

DROPOUT RATE

Proposed Standards

1) The Commission recommends that no regular high school in the City of New York should have an annual dropout rate above 7.5%. Schools' progress toward meeting this standard should be assessed using as a baseline figure the average of their dropout rates in the three years prior to the standards process.

2) The Commission recommends that schools which fall below this dropout standard should be expected to demonstrate significant improvement in their dropout rate in each of the three initial years of the standards process, as well as to reduce their deficit by at least fifty percent by the end of the three-year period.

3) The Commission recommends that the Board develop the capacity to monitor inappropriate transfers from one high school to another.

Discussion

The Chancellor's Commission has proposed the standards above with the conviction that no number of dropouts is acceptable. We believe that schools must do everything in their power to hold students through high school graduation. However, the Commission recognizes that the dropout problem is not entirely the responsibility of the school system. Economic and other imperatives may contribute to a 'natural' rate of dropping out. For example, until every young person can be confident that rewarding employment will be available after receiving a diploma, the school system will be fighting an uphill battle.

The recent 6.6 percent improvement in the citywide dropout rate can and must continue. The improvement in the Board of Education's capacity to track the educational progress of students who leave school is essential to a fair and meaningful standards process. We anticipate that some of the improvement which will be required to meet the standards above will be accomplished by continuing to upgrade the system's monitoring capabilities. In addition, the early success with new dropout-prevention efforts demonstrates that we can and must have very high expectations for these programs. The Commission has proposed its standard for the dropout rate with confidence that it can be met.

Given the desirability of a zero dropout rate, and the influx of resources to dropout-prevention efforts, the Commission considers the 7.5% dropout standard both demanding and manageable. This standard is also in line with the Chancellor's goal of reducing the dropout rate by fifty percent for this year's class of ninth graders.

Roughly 63% of regular NYC high schools will fall below this standard. For most schools the amount of improvement required in the next three years is minimal. In order to reduce their deficit by 50%, two-thirds of these schools will have to produce only a 3% improvement in the initial three years of the standards process. The school with the worst dropout record over the last three years will have to reduce its dropout rate by roughly 6 percent.

The Commission sees two important long-term goals with respect to the dropout standard. The Commission believes that the annual and projected four-year dropout rates can be expressed in terms that will be more useful and meaningful in school improvement efforts. Presently, dropouts from all four grade levels are reported together. The Commission would like to see a dropout rate which reports the percent of an incoming ninth grade cohort that has dropped out in each of the four years of high school. We urge Board of Education staff to continue their work in developing the capacity to analyze dropout trends by following cohorts over several years rather than looking at annual aggregate rates.

In addition, the Commission believes that the dropout standard must be sensitive to the fact that dropping out is often a process with many stages. Dropping out of the system may follow transferring out of a competitive or educational option program back into a zoned high school. As dropouts are presently measured, the burden of dropout prevention falls on the zoned high schools. However, other schools which have greater control over their incoming population, and which eventual dropouts may have attended previously, may contribute to the failure of students to complete their education. For this reason, we are calling on Board staff to develop the capacity to measure the number of high school students who transfer from one school to another for inappropriate reasons.

Commission members are very concerned about the extent to which dropout and attendance rates reflect administrative as well as student behavior. The choice of when to initiate student discharge proceedings can have an enormous effect on the appearance of a school's dropout rate without having any effect whatsoever on students' engagement in school. For this reason, the Commission is calling for three year improvement goals to be based on an average from three previous years. In addition, the Commission is setting rigorous dropout and attendance standards conjointly so that improvement on one standard cannot be gained at the price of lower achievement on the other.

One of the charges to the Commission is to develop a procedure for incorporating background information about schools into the standards process. The Commission has not yet decided on a procedure. We are considering a statistical treatment which would enable us to account for the presence of "hard to teach" students in a school's population by weighting these students more heavily. The Commission will discuss a formula by which the relative weighted status of such a school can be considered alongside indicators of its absolute productivity. Both kinds of assessment should be used by the Chancellor in determining a course of corrective action. In addition, the Commission urges the Board to recognize and supply the resources which may be required in many of these schools if they are to have a realistic chance of educating their students.

3. Problems related to what is to be measured, i.e. what characteristics of institutions, staff and students? Should we look at process as well as status characteristics? Should we measure change as well as level? How should we account for attitudes and dispositions?

The quality and effectiveness of schooling traditionally is thought of as reflected in the quality of the students produced by the schools. Since student achievement is generally considered to be the most important outcome of schools, most efforts at studying the productivity of schools have focused on indicators of student achievement. We often turn to standardized achievement tests in order to avoid the possible sources of bias to be found in course grades.

In the effort to arrive at standards and criteria for assessing the New York City schools, we have turned to the data for such standardized tests. We are also looking at such indicators as dropout rates, attendance rates, and graduation rates. All of these indicators of students status inform us with respect to what students achieve or fail to achieve, but they say little about what these students do in school or what the schools do for them.

In the assessment of schooling we need to give more attention to the organizational, managerial and resource characteristics of the institutions in which schooling occurs. For a complete picture we can hardly ignore the people who staff our schools, what they do, and under what circumstances. We need accurate indicators of the climate and level of expectations in our schools, and we need to be able to assess attitudes, values and appreciations as input and outcome variables. As we emphasize absolute levels of performance and achievement, we lose important aspects of student growth if we are insensitive to indicators of change in the cognitive, affective and social dimensions of institutional and personal behavior. We need to give greater attention to the assessment of such aspects of achievement as capacities for critical thinking, problem solving, systematizing random information, contrasting and weighing values, and compassionate resolution of human conflicts. The recommendations in this report are not sufficiently responsive to these concerns. As we refine the system of accountability and improvement, we must broaden the range of variables we measure.

4. Problems related to the adequacy and validity of available assessment technology, i.e. questions related to norm-based and criterion-referenced testing, validity of achievement testing, test bias, etc.

Available assessment technology provides few alternatives to using standardized tests or subjective judgments to measure school effectiveness. We continue to hear questions about the validity of standardized tests. Do they measure the competencies and functions which they claim to measure? Are they too heavily focused on content mastery to the neglect of process elements? Are they sufficiently sensitive to critical thinking, creative thought, attributional factors and values?

Members of the Commission have repeatedly expressed concern about the norm-based character of our use of standardized tests. The Commission believes that we need to base standards not on relative position but on more precise indicators of what is known in relation to a more absolute notion of what is required to handle the next level of academic work. This has led the Commission to recommend that the New York City Board of Education move as quickly as possible toward the use of criterion-referenced tests, or at least to a criterion-referenced mode for reporting test data.

We are nonetheless persuaded that even criterion-referenced tests are problematic. Criteria used in these tests cannot be set in concrete but must be subject to review and adjustment. They should be determined by instructional experts in relevant content, guided, of course, by past and present experiential and normative data. The criteria must reflect the changing performance demands of subsequent learning and work situations.

Since the purpose of standard-setting and assessment is to improve the performance of students and schools, and since the data by which improvement is to be guided must reflect function as well as status, the Commission recognizes the limitations of any test-based approach to school assessment. The Commission therefore urges the Board of Education to accelerate its exploration of new data collection and data management procedures which are sensitive to changes in the nature of student and institutional behavior, to the process components of performance, and to attributional and dispositional phenomena which are increasingly recognized as influencing the quality of performance by students and staff.

5. Problems related to the determination of judgments of performance, i.e. subjective basis of much that is important in education.

In calling for criterion-referenced tests and a more qualitative approach to the assessment of the performance of students and schools, we are cognizant of the fact that as we move away from standardized instruments administered under standard conditions we are more and more dependent upon the subjective determination of judgment. Standardized tests owe their wide usage in part to their presumed objectivity. Yet so much of what is important in

education does not lend itself to objective and precise measurement. The Commission has not set a standard for the quality of educational leadership, yet who among us is prepared to argue that leadership is unimportant? The problem is that we don't have a quick, reliable and objective instrument for measuring leadership. The Commission has not even considered a standard for student task involvement or even time on task, yet the research literature clearly indicates that time spent actively engaged in activities appropriate to what is to be learned is a critical determinant of effectiveness of learning. Again we are reaching into a domain where judgments of performance are crucial. In some instances we do not yet have the technology for such assessments. In others the tasks are highly labor intensive. In all there is the need that we systematize and develop reliability for the applications of human judgment to the performances in question. It is the sense of the Commission that if improvement is to receive priority in this assessment effort, the Board of Education will need to devote resources to the development of the capacity to judge performance in a manner which is both competent and just.

6. Problems related to the implementation of a program of school assessment when the purpose is to improve institutions with a history of marginality and to maintain or improve institutions with a history of exceptionally high achievement.

The problems are 1) to devise minimum assessment standards and procedures followed by improvement programs which encourage low-performing and marginal schools to reveal their weaknesses, rather than to try to hide them, in the knowledge that the intent is to help them improve; and 2) to devise higher standards which encourage higher performing schools to respond to the challenge to improve their quality rather than to rest comfortably on their achieved status. The ever increasing demand for higher levels of intellectual competence and technical skill is such that none of our schools can afford to rest on their laurels. All of our schools can do better. We face a special responsibility to identify and help those schools whose performance is seriously impaired even while we maintain and improve upon our effective and high-performing schools. The special challenge to an adequate system of accountability and improvement is to do both, justly and promptly, to build the FOUNDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.

APPENDIX A

Ms. Amina Abdur-Rahman
Policy Advisor
Manhattan Borough President's Office

Dr. Gregory Anrig, President
Educational Testing Service

Dr. Joyce Brown
University Dean for Urban Affairs
City University of New York

Ms. Elsie Chan, Principal
Lower East Side Prep. School

Dr. Lloyd M. Cooke
Public Consultant for Education
New York City Board of Education

Mr. Bernard Charles
Program Officer
Carnegie Foundation

Ms. Joyce Coppin
Superintendent, District 16

Ms. Bettye Felton
Field Staff Director
United Parents Associations

Dr. Joshua Fishman
Distinguished University Research Professor
Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology

Dr. Pascal D. Forgione, Jr.
Chief, Office of Research and Evaluation
CT Department of Education

Ms. Jeanne Frankl, Executive Director
Public Education Association

Dr. Harvey Garner
Superintendent, District 18

Mr. Ron Gonella, Secretary
United Parents' Associations

Ms. Winifred Grant, Director
Community Relations/ Economic Development
New York Telephone Company

Dr. J. Jerome Harris
Superintendent, District 13

Dr. Aileen O. James
NAACP

Mr. Milton Kopelman, Principal
Bronx High School of Science

Mr. Gilbert Lopez, Director
Comprehensive Math and Science Program
Columbia University

Dr. Flora Mancuso-Edwards, President
Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College

Mr. Bernard Mecklowitz
Superintendent, District 1

The Honorable Olga A. Mendez
State Senator

Mr. L. Scott Miller
Program Officer
Exxon Education Foundation

Dr. Thomas K. Minter
Dean of Professional Studies
Herbert H. Lehman College

Dr. Abdin Noboa
Director of Research
New Haven Public Schools

Mr. Joseph Petrella
Superintendent, District 28

Dr. Luis Reyes
ASPIRA of New York City, Inc.

Ms. Carmen Rodriguez
Superintendent, District 7

Mr. Simpson Sasserath
Council of Supervisors and Administrators

Mr. David Sherman
Assistant to the President
United Federation of Teachers

FERKAUF GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Albert Einstein College of Medicine Campus
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
1165 Morris Park Avenue
Bronx, New York 10461

Joshua A. Fishman, Ph.D.
Office: (212) 430-4201
Home : (212) 881-5413
May 23, 1986

Prof. Edmund W. Gordon
ISPS, Yale University
P.O. Box 1823 Yale Station
New Haven, Connecticut 06520-1823

Dear Ed:

I am painfully aware of the fact, and I know you are too, that I did not attend any sessions of the Chancellor's Commission after the very first session. Unfortunately, the subsequent sessions were always on Wednesdays or Thursdays, i.e., on the days that I teach. Nevertheless, I carefully read the progress reports and found myself in agreement with their contents, except for the complete absence of one area. It is in that connection that I would like to register my dissent. I will not be able to call your office or that of your assistant next week (I will be out of the country). Accordingly, I am putting my dissent in writing and ask that it be included in Appendix B of the final report.

An unrecognized area of necessary minimum competence, particularly in the latter part of the 20th century, is that of communicative competence in a language other than English. This is a crucial need, both for English Proficient and for Limited English Proficient students. The need derives from the increasing heterogeneity of the American population as well as from the shrinking nature of the world at large. To leave the English Proficient student monolingual is to foster both provincialism and disdain relative to the cultures and peoples of the USA and of the world. On the other hand, to deny Limited English Proficient students the opportunity to further refine their command of their own non-English language is to waste a resource that could serve them and the entire country in untold areas of cultural, commercial and diplomatic endeavor. New York schools must stop ignoring the students' and the country's crying need for real familiarity with languages other than English. This is not an esoteric luxury. Nor is it a competence of lesser priority for schools serving large contingents of academically troubled and troublesome students. It is a competence which, if developed, will enrich them, as well as all other children, and no school program today can be considered as meeting its obligations if it has a blind-spot in this connection, an area fully as fundamental as the proverbial 3 R's.

Sincerely,

Joshua A. Fishman, Ph.D.
Distinguished University
Research Professor,
Social Sciences

JAF:la

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

- Foundations for Academic Excellence
- Universal Standards
- Endorsement of 50% Deficit Reduction
- Additional Improvement Objectives
- Future Data Improvements
- Further Study *(to be completed by 9/86)*
  a. Test Policy for LEP Students
  b. Reporting data for Special Education Students
  c. Alternative High Schools
- Implementation Recommendations
  a. Standards Appeal Panel
  b. On-Going Review

CHARACTERISTICS OF MINIMUM STANDARDS

- All standards exceed those of the State Education Department
- Minimum Standards and Progressive Goals
- Expected progress is reasonable yet challenging. Standards are credible
- Further standards based on new testing program to be recommended in September 1986
- Standards to be set in Writing and Incidents *(more data needed)*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MINIMUM STANDARDS

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading	
Grade 3	At least 60% read at or above State Reference Point (50th percentile)
Grade 6	At least 65% read at or above State Reference Point (50th percentile)
Grades 2, 4, 5	Progressive goals to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	
Grade 3	At least 65% score at or above State Reference Point
Grade 6	At least 65% score at or above State Reference Point
Grades 2, 4, 5	Progressive goals to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Attendance	Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 90%

MIDDLE SCHOOL
MINIMUM STANDARDS

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading	
Grade 8	At least 80% score at or above State Reference Point (39th percentile)
Grades 7 and 9	Progress standards to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	
Grade 9	At least 70% pass RCT or Regents (at least 25% pass Regents)
Grade 7	Progressive goal to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
Grade 8	Fixed standard to be determined using new test data (September, 1986)
• Attendance	Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 85%
• Promotion Rate	New indicator to be developed

HIGH SCHOOL
MINIMUM STANDARDS

Note: The Executive Director of the High School Division will set Higher Standards for Specialized/Educational Option Schools.

CHANCELLOR'S CRITERIA	RECOMMENDED STANDARDS
• Reading/Writing	a. 100% of twelfth graders pass RCTs or Regents b. At least 30% meet requirement by passing Regents c. Progress standards in Grades 9 and 10 to be determined (September, 1986)
• Mathematics	a. At least 70% pass RCT or Regents in Grade 9 (at least 25% pass Regents) b. At least 80% pass RCT or Regents by Grade 10 (at least 25% pass Regents) c. At least 90% pass RCT or Regents by Grade 11 (at least 25% pass Regents) d. 100% pass RCT or Regents by Grade 12 (at least 25% pass Regents)
• Graduation Rate	At least 90% of eligible candidates graduate (January - June - August)
• Regents-Endorsed Diplomas	At least 15% of graduates receive Regents-Endorsed Diplomas
• Dropout Rate	No school's dropout rate is above 7.5% annually
• Attendance	a. Every school has an average daily attendance rate of at least 85% b. No more than 20% absent 16 or more days per semester c. No more than 5% Long Term Absentees

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Comprehensive School Improvement Program
- Class Size Reductions
- Reading/Writing Programs
- Junior High School Pilot Program
- Dropout Prevention Programs
- Staff Development Programs